

Current and Future Federal Highway Programs

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March 24, 1998
84th Purdue Road School
Purdue University

INTRODUCTION

Good morning. It is a pleasure to be back at Purdue again and to address this conference at a key time in the reauthorization of the Federal-aid highway program..

My topic—Current and Future Federal Highway Programs—presents me with a dilemma. The landmark legislation under which we operated from 1992 through 1997—the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA)—expired last October. Currently, we're operating under short term legislation that has almost run its course too. The future programs are still "under construction." I'm happy to say that the Senate has taken action to get us back on the road toward authorization of a multi-year surface transportation program by passing a 6 year highway and transit package on March 12. We can only hope that the momentum on Capitol Hill will carry surface transportation reauthorization legislation to enactment soon. The House is scheduled to markup their bill today.

CURRENT PROGRAMS - ISTEA

ISTEA, as you know, wasn't just a continuation of the past. Instead it required all of us to view transportation differently. It demanded that we be intermodal, to plan more effectively, to bring new partners, such as the private freight sector to the table, to strengthen the role of local governments and MPOs, to protect and enhance the environment, and much more. Because of ISTEA, I believe we have developed a flexible, sustainable, results-oriented approach to transportation.

This less-traveled road wasn't always easy. In fact sometimes it was downright hard. But we found that most folks saw the wisdom in this new approach. They thought there were a few areas we needed to improve on but overall were convinced that the new legislation needed to build on ISTEA. "Tune it, don't toss it."

FUTURE PROGRAMS

I'm not going to address specific bills today. I'm going to tell you what I think needs to be done to keep the surface transportation programs moving in the right direction.

Funding Level

Investment in an infrastructure is a high priority for the Clinton Administration because we believe transportation is a critical component of a healthy economy that can compete globally. President Clinton promised in 1992 that we would rebuild America. He, and we, are still committed to that promise. But this cannot be done at the expense of the historic balanced budget agreement that was so carefully crafted just 10 months ago.

The leadership in both the Senate and the House have also pledged to stay within the discretionary spending caps set in the budget resolution. "Budget busting" funding levels and proposals to take the Highway Trust Fund off budget have been put aside for now. The Senate package amounts to about a \$20 billion annual highway program and a \$7 billion transit program. If the House comes in at that level as well, we will have a program a third bigger than today. For Indiana, the average annual highway apportionment is over \$600 million in ISTEA.

In addition, multi-year funding of State Infrastructure Banks and enhanced credit mechanisms are needed to meet the varied financial needs of the States.

Safety

Motor vehicle crashes annually kill more than 41,000 Americans and injure three million more. These crashes, and the attendant losses in productivity and travel time, place a huge burden on our economy—over \$150 billion annually. Improving safety even as travel grows requires strong federal leadership and support. We face a number of safety related challenges

- An increased mandate for safety on an increased number of heavily traveled roads
- Aging roadways and other infrastructure
- An increase in the number of motor carriers subject to Federal safety oversight (increased from 190,000 in 1989 to about 400,000 in 1996)
- Increase in the number of commercially licensed drivers
- Increase in the number of aggressive drivers
- Increase in numbers of young and elderly drivers

Most of the challenges I noted are demographic in nature. Our safety programs can't change population trends so we have to minimize their impacts. We must:

- Open the door for increased funding for behavioral programs.
- Focus on performance-based management—focus on obtaining the desired results, not the methodology.
- Fund research to identify ways to improve commercial motor vehicle safety.
- Encourage coordinated and integrated safety planning at the State level.

- Continue and expand countermeasure programs. These countermeasures have proven effectiveness. During the ISTEA period, countermeasures have save lives and dollars.
 - 0.8 alcohol level for defining impaired/drunken driving
 - Safety belts and child restraints have saved 35,000 lives; primary seat belt laws are needed.
 - Age 21 drinking laws saved 3,300 lives
 - Highway hazard elimination program has saved 6,200 lives
 - Rail-highway grade crossing program has saved 1,700 lives
 - Other Federal-aid, State and local roadway safety programs have saved more than 10,000 lives
 - Despite a 170% increase in the number of drivers holding commercial driver licenses since 1991, the crash rate involving large trucks dropped from 2.9 per 100 million vehicle-miles traveled to 2.5 in 1995. In 1 year (1995), the number of fatalities in accidents involving large trucks decreased 4.7 percent

Environment

ISTEA's landmark environmental provisions allowed us to reduce air and water pollution, to preserve wetlands and open space, and to make transportation more compatible with the environment. The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program, the Transportation Enhancements Program, Recreational Trails Program, and Scenic Byways Program are part of the success story. We must continue these programs and ensure that they remain viable. The CMAQ program must be poised to help areas that fail new air quality standards as they are set.

Strengthening Communities

We must also strengthen our communities. ISTEA gave our communities greater participation in the transportation program and this should be continued. We should strengthen the role of cities in the planning process and simplify that planning requirements--both House and Senate bills will enable us to move in that direction..

Transit is vital to maintaining our metropolitan areas as viable commercial centers as well as providing essential transportation service in less-populated areas. Communities need more funding for transit and the flexibility to choose transit and intercity rail as substitutes for increased highway capacity. The transit programs must be balanced, providing equitable treatment for urban transit, nonurban transit, rural programs, and programs to provide services to elderly and disabled people.

We need to get people off the welfare rolls and onto payrolls. This will require investment in flexible, innovative transportation alternatives to get people to where the jobs are--special funding programs are needed.

Research and Technology (R&T)

Research is the key to finding solutions to new and emerging transportation challenges. There is a significant Federal role in R&T. There is no other organization to do the long-term, high-risk research that will deliver the future technologies which are crucial to the surface transportation program. We must also take the lead in ensuring that innovative technologies are deployed by surface transportation community and make funding available for this purpose to the State Departments of Transportation.

Research has led us to better design and construction techniques, more durable and higher strength materials for highway construction, and modeling and traffic control techniques. We must continue to press for new ideas and implement those with great promise. A new deployment program to advance proven techniques is needed.

Technology has always been an important part of the transportation picture to help improve the performance of all our transportation systems, effectively increase their capacity and to make travel safer. Today, we are poised to launch the deployment of a national intelligent transportation infrastructure, and the development of a fully integrated intelligent vehicle. One of the most strategic investments we can make is to equip our highways and transit systems with Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technologies.

ITS priorities are:

- Model deployment in the largest cities
- Intelligent vehicle research
- Standards development and architecture acceptance
- Professional capacity building
- Rural applications research and field testing
- Commercial vehicle applications
- Technology transfer

Maintaining the Intermodal Focus

We must continue ISTEA's legacy of intermodal focus for our surface transportation programs. Our transportation system is more complex than ever, with passengers and freight using many modes to meet their transportation needs. In this intermodal age, choice is the byword. We believe flexibility is key to good transportation decisions. We should expand the types of projects that States and local governments and transit operators can advance with core program funds. Broad eligibility for intermodal connections is needed.

Finally, on any "challenge" list of mine is meeting the transportation needs of the freight and trade community. Transportation links communities, provides service to the freight industry, and service to the manufacturers and shippers who create the jobs and the wealth that make our country strong. We recognize that we need to do more to understand their concerns and try to meet their needs.

Under ISTEA we have already been leading an effort to work more closely with the freight and trade community.

- We have developed the National Freight Partnership, an open coalition of shippers, carriers, and others in the freight and international trade field, formed to help bridge the gap between public sector transport decision making, and affording better understanding of the freight community.
- We support the Freight Stakeholders Coalition; we've sponsored a series of National Freight Conferences on topics of current and emerging national interest and we've worked with the Secretary to develop a DOT National Freight Policy.

We want the emphasis on freight and trade issues to become even stronger. We will focus greater attention on freight in the planning process. Special attention is needed for trade corridors and border gateways. We need to facilitate corridor development and border planning, and address the transportation impacts of the North American Free Trade Agreement and international trade growth.

Improving How We Do Business

The Congress determines what programs the Federal transportation agencies will implement. But it is up to those agencies to effectively administer the enacted programs. Transportation agencies are no different from other Government agencies and the private sector when it comes to dealing with realities of scarce resources and customer expectations. Federal, State and local agencies have downsized, contracted out more work, eliminated layers of management, diversified their work forces, and openly embraced the total quality management philosophy. Employee empowerment (and responsibility), continuous improvement and customer focus are the three pillars of this quality construct. The Federal Highway Administration has moved in this direction and will continue on what we have termed our "quality journey."

CLOSING

Obviously our future surface transportation programs are still "under construction" in the Congress. I've talked about what I would like to see in the surface transportation legislation. I'm happy to say that the bills under consideration in the House of Representatives and the Senate contain many of the provisions the Administration is hoping for. They build on ISTEA and respond to today's challenges. We will be providing technical assistance to the Senate and House of Representatives as they work through their respective bills and resolve their differences in a Conference bill.

I'm not going to predict when the Congress will have a bill for the President's signature. But you may be sure that we will be working with them until the job is done. Our hope is a Conference bill in May in order to ease the safety and construction impacts from the limited funding that the 6-month Act provided.

Thank you.